

# **PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS IN PHYSICS: THE HISTORICAL RELATION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENTIFIC THEORIES BY JAMES T. CUSHING**

## **Philosophical Concepts in Physics**

THE HISTORICAL RELATION BETWEEN  
PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

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'For anyone who really wants to understand physics, this is a splendid and beautifully written book ... this book is an excellent introduction to a historically based philosophy of science, with accurate reporting of many examples from physics, and much attention to primary sources. I would recommend it strongly as an adjunct to standard textbooks of physics for students who seek a real understanding of their subject.' Michael Redhead, *Physics World*

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This book examines a selection of philosophical issues in the context of specific episodes in the development of physical theories and presents scientific advances within their historical and philosophical contexts. Philosophical considerations have played an essential and ineliminable role in the actual practice of science. The book begins with some necessary introduction to the history of ancient and early modern science, but emphasizes the two great watersheds of twentieth-century physics: relativity and quantum mechanics. At times the term "construction" may seem more appropriate than "discovery" for the way theories have developed and, especially in later chapters, the discussion focuses on the influence of historical, philosophical and even social factors on the form and content of scientific theories.

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a very good reading

By metacristi

The perfect balance between physics and philosophy, getting to the social dimension of scientific quest its deserved place (usually overlooked by many scientists, advocates of a (too) strong concept of rationality in science). I liked especially the chapters dedicated to modern physics, underdetermination and theory ladenness are really big problems for modern science, in no case are we entitled to underestimate them (I don't think that Bayesianism, objective or subjective, is enough to reject them). Overall a good reading, especially for those having some previous knowledge of physics, it shows clearly that one must go well beyond the usual cliché that science is only inductive and that we have enough probabilistic justification for the view that it surely approach at least approximate Truth.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Lots of Physics...No Philosophy

By GrizzlyMike

This work reads more like a general overview of the history of ideas regarding the physical universe rather than a philosophical treatment of the ideas behind physics. The book merely presents in a linear fashion the major ideas that revolutionized our views of the physical world but goes no further than presenting the theories as matter of fact. There are no discussions into the interplay between the philosophy of ideas and the actual modeling of the physical world using the scientific method. It reads similar to Stephen Hawking's "On The Shoulders of Giants"(a much more interesting work).

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

More like History of Physics

By Muzaffer Muctehitzade

My be I was expecting more from the book based on the title of the book but after all I was satisfied. Author provides a good history of Physics from Greeks to Quantum Theory. In Quantum theory you feel some Philosophical discussions but otherwise it is a science book and a good one with formulas, schematics like a text book. What I liked most was the excerpts from the original writings as the author was making his point. Paragraph from Newton's, Kepler's , Maxwell's, Bohr's, Bell's writings, all those fellows. It is serious book and requires serious reading. Also there is good references for further readings.

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